should be a medically fit Central/State Government employee, not more than 45 years of age as on 1st January of the year of Haj, holding a non-gazetted post not below the grade of Upper Division Clerk of Central Government or equivalent. Preference is given to applicants having knowledge of regional languages and experience in public relations.

(b) The number of Haj Assistants deputed during 1999 to 2001 are as follows :—

Year	Number of Haj Assistants
1999	106
2000	125
2001	116

For the Haj 2002, 125 'Haj Assistants' are proposed to be deputed.

(c) Marginal increase as compared to last year has been proposed.

(d) No, Madam.

(e) Question does not arise.

China's desire to join SAARC

4190. SHRI C.M. IBRAHIM : Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether China has again expressed its desire to join the South Asia Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC); and

(b) if so, what is Government's response thereto by way of sponsoring or supporting China's entry into SAARC?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI OMAR ABDULLAH) : (a) No, Sir.

(b) Does not arise.

Indo-Malaysian Agreement

4191. SHRI NANA DESHMUKH :
SHRI C.M. IBRAHIM :

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether India and Malaysia have signed seven agreements during the recent visit of Prime Minister to that country;